



November (2019 #05)

What a Bazaar Way to Aid Development!

When the bell rang for the closing of this year's fall fair, it was a bittersweet moment as this was to be the final fall fair – but what a tremendous 25 years it's been. For a quarter of a century the fair has funnelled funds towards financing Rayjon projects in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This year's (approx.) \$12,000 in net proceeds probably approximates as good a number as any for the average annual revenue that the fair has generated for a quarter of a century.

Originally the Fall Fair was referred to as a bazaar. It came as an off-shoot of the Sacred Heart Harvest Festival and Suzanne Michaud was in charge. It was a more modest enterprise back then in 1994. The profit was \$800, Everyone at the time was overjoyed and stunned by the enormity of their success.

Since its inception the fall fair gradually grew, becoming bigger and better and more lucrative in its efforts to bolster fundraising efforts for the Rayjon organization's project work. For example, in 1999 the revenue was less than \$4,000, but by 2001 it had more than doubled to over \$8,000. Since then, new records have been repeatedly set as organizers and volunteers crafted new methods and perfected other means of making the fair a success. By 2017 the revenue had more than doubled again as a new record of \$17,500 was achieved.

It would require a herculean effort to comb through 25 years of financial records in an effort to arrive at a grand total figure. Procedures have changed over the years, such as how to account for coffee, vanilla and Atizani sales. But using the aforementioned \$12k as an approximate average value, the grand total for the life of the bazaar/fair is somewhere in the ballpark of \$300,000 – truly remarkable!!

Who is responsible and who is there to thank for this wonderful support to the mission and objectives of Rayjon?

To begin with, it is easiest and most proper to quote the fair's convenor:

“On behalf of the 16 member committee of women who have fueled and organized the annual Rayjon Fall Fair for the past 25 years, I want to say thank you to our local community that has never wavered in its support. Your ongoing generosity has allowed us to deliver a quality one-day event every September that has raised an amazing amount of money and awareness for Rayjon's projects in Haiti and the Dominican

Republic. We have forged stronger connections among ourselves as we worked and reached out together to our Haitian and Dominican beneficiaries. With gratitude, Dianne McKillican. Rayjon Fall Fair Convenor”

Rayjon is also indebted to the leaders and members of Sacred Heart School, Grace United, and Our Lady of Mercy who generously hosted the Fall Fair event over its lifetime.



There are countless stories that could be told over a cup of tea, or glass of wine: names and nicknames for some of the volunteers, funny things that were sold but, as the saying goes... “what happens on tour, stays on tour”. Even the mention of the names of people who have faithfully contributed year after year to the success of the fair will not be mentioned here, because as Dianne puts it “... *every one of those women would DIE a 1000 deaths if this was made public, put in print.*” And there are quite simply too many people to name: individuals who worked together, blended together, supported and respected one another as a team – always with the result of enhancing the final outcome ... and a constant undercurrent of generalized hilarity was never lost.

There were mixed feelings about deciding to make this our last Fall Fair. It is a hugely exhausting event to administer, operate and cleanup after. It is also observable that demographics, lifestyles and technology change with time. Books, tapes and LP’s are phasing out as people have increasing access to their readily downloadable electronic counterparts. Fair attendees are less inclined to want Goods, they want Food! And there are more downsizers than gatherers/accumulators. The decision to discontinue the fair was not made lightly and discussion on the subject began a good year ago. Rayjon is pleased that we are leaving this community event on a high note, fully appreciative of all the support it has received from you, our home community, over the past 25 years.

At the Rayjon Annual General Meeting, October 24, 2019, a tribute composed by Suzanne Michaud was read aloud to the assembled crowd. It was received with hearty

and heartfelt applause, and is shared here with the consent of its author. All were in agreement that it pretty much summed their feelings up nicely.

My name is Suzanne Michaud and I have been a member of Rayjon since its beginnings.

I have not attended a lot of meetings, but I have been fortunate to be active in the Fall Fair group which has been assembled and guided by Dianne McKillican – We have just terminated 25 years of Fall Fair.

Dianne had a vision from the big picture to the smallest detail. Yes, she had the vision, the commitment, the energy, and the know how to make this work plus a great sense of humour!

She listened, she asked, she cajoled, she consulted and made us all aware of our capabilities. What one person could not do another could.

It was amazing to discover the talents in the new family – all that was needed was guidance and encouragement, listening and pondering – and action. This was provided abundantly by Dianne. And it worked!

At the same time, this family developed lifelong friendships and ways of working and growing together for this one common goal: to help provide education and medical relief in Haiti.

On behalf of the Fall Fair workers, I want to thank you Dianne for being an incredible leader, considerate, selfless, funny, an amazing worker at all levels. How did you do this monumental task in its complexity, year after year for 25 years, I asked myself.

The answer came in the words of The Sound of Music:

How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?

How do you keep a wave upon the sand? ...

How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?

With much love and gratitude, thank you Dianne, thank you so much!

This final chapter regarding the annual Rayjon Fall Fair is also a door to *new* community events that the Rayjon Community Engagement Committee continues to work on developing. “To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” We hope you enjoy the next chapter as much as we have all enjoyed this previous one. Rayjon is alive and well and there will continue to be many opportunities to engage existing volunteers – we hope we can continue to count on your ongoing amazing support. And we just as fervently welcome anyone new to volunteering with us; please consider taking an active part in joining our cause!!

New Stories – FLASH!

Keep a lookout on the Rayjon webpage ... a new feature, currently under construction, is emerging. Go to <https://rayjon.org/stories/> and read our first human interest story.

Highlights of Rayjon Annual General Meeting

We opened the October 29th meeting by reading in unison Our Vision: “A world in which people have an equal opportunity to thrive – empowered, independent and self-sufficient.”

In light of the extreme political unrest in Haiti currently, we recognize the increased risks and difficulties faced by the people we are trying to support. We are not idle. We are

using this time to plan and prepare to reboot activity as soon as the unrest subsides sufficiently. And in the meantime we also offer our moral support and whatever tangible support is possible.

Partnerships at home and abroad are growing and strengthening. Of special note is the Haitian Women's Federation who are engaged in exciting new activities. In Canada we added partnerships with Fanshawe College (web page design & new 2020 fundraising event), NOVA Chemicals (microcredit program) and the Refined Fool Brewing Co (International Women's Day event).

The President's Reunion in June brought together about 60 people to enjoy a social evening, share stories, and hear an outstanding presentation on the status of Rayjon Projects. Look for upcoming information about the 2020 President's Reunion.

REMEMBERING THE PAST:

Next year, 2020, will be the 10th anniversary of the Haiti earthquake!

Thank You!

To our many donors, we must say again a tremendous thank you. With your donation you make a lasting change to the lives of people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic

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